

The Sanguinist

Voice of CATHOLIC ACTION

Saint Joseph's of Indiana COLLEGEVILLE,
INDIANA



Man Is Made to Labor As the Bird to Fly

God made man to work. He gave us the powers of mind and body, that we may imitate Him, the Great Worker. To labor with head and hands is a part of our human vocation and has been man's privilege from the very beginning. Adam and Eve were meant to work in Eden. "And the Lord God took man and put him into the paradise of pleasure to dress it and to keep it." Adam was to till the ground and Eve was to care for the family in God's first garden. God has made us capable for work, that we might satisfy our needs, that we might serve each other, that we might develop our powers to the full and bring Him glory. The pain and the sweat, the hardship and the contradiction in work are a result of the fall, but the work itself is part of God's original plan for us, part of the joy that Adam and Eve knew in paradise. To show us still more clearly this fundamental goodness of work, God-made-Man spent all but three years of His earthly life in the carpenter shop at Nazareth, demonstrating unmistakably the dignity of our vocation as workers.

In our modern world we tend to forget the essential goodness of work because much of the work we do is far removed from truly human activity. Fully human labor is purposeful, responsible, free—the generous gift of the worker's self to the task to be done. It calls into play all our powers: the clear vision of intelligence, the firm decisions of will, the warmth of love, the supple strength and skill of body. But for most people today work connotes only a dreary routine, performed under the compulsion of earning a living, but without interest or meaning for the workingman. Filling boxes on a conveyor belt, typing to the steady drone of the dictaphone, or writing advertising copy for trivial products, these activities hardly measure up to the full concept of human work. Looking with sorrow at the conditions of work in the modern world, Pope Pius XI writes in his encyclical letter, "Quadragesimo Anno," "Bodily labor, which was decreed by Providence for the good of man's body and soul even after original sin, is too often changed into an instrument of strange perversion: for dead matter leaves the factory ennobled and

transformed, where men are corrupted and degraded."

It is our great task as Christian men and women to restore a Christian philosophy of work and to find types of work which are worthy of our dignity as human beings, workers made to the image and likeness of God.

To the Seniors,

who now step up to their
sublime vocation
of Restoring All Things To Him,
who graduate
to the fullness of Christian living
in a world
which "knows Him not". . .
this Sanguinist is respectfully
dedicated,
with a prayer for their guidance
by the breath of
His Holy Spirit.

Work: A Molder of Character . . .

Work molds character. Patience, humility, reverence—these are part of the price of mastery in every kind of work: the way to the vision of the philosopher and to the smooth skill of the good carpenter. Work demands effort and courage to overcome obstacles, perseverance and generosity to go on when weary mind and aching muscles protest and the task looms large. It is through the countless decisions made in ordinary daily work that a human character is forged. We not only make cars and tables and pictures and books in our work: we make ourselves.

The boy who from his dad learns to cut a neat joint in wood, or plane a surface—the girl who learns under her mother's wise guidance to knit with firm even stitches, is learning care, thoroughness, precision, and self-discipline, all indispensable virtues for the whole of her life. Work is a great molder of character, disciplining the will of the worker.



“But David, aren't you being a little naive?”



Work: A Mirror of Character



“But Pope Leo, aren't you being a little naive?”

Character is revealed with undisguised clarity in our work, in the way we rake a lawn, write a letter, or keep our accounts. To gain a true picture of ourselves, we have only to look at our work, and there we see our qualities and faults writ large.

It is easiest to see ourselves in the work of our hands. We can hardly practice self-deception when the results of our labor confront us, visible and tangible, for all the world to judge. The burned supper cannot help but bear witness to the carelessness of the cook. Thus daily work presents many examples which together form a mosaic of character by which we can know ourselves and can know each other. Work is a mirror of character, reflecting a true and clear image of the personality.

The Sacramentality of Work

Every physical object, every bodily action, is a symbol of a spiritual reality, a sign post pointing our minds to the invisible world. Everything we see and do is full of meaning if we know how to read the symbols and to interpret what they tell us of our life in Christ. That is why the Church blesses all sorts of common objects: butter and cheese, houses and barns, animals and machines, to remind us to see the sacramental meaning of our work, and to use all things for God's glory.

Thus, when she blesses the seed, asking God to bring forth an abundant harvest from our sowing, she thinks of the eternal sower planting the seed of His word in the stony soil of our hearts. When she looks upon the harvest, she reminds her children to offer the first fruits to God and she implores His grace that we may use His gifts for the health of both soul and body. She wishes to draw all kinds of work, all the diverse investments of man's mind into the stream of her life. She blesses the airplane in the power of Him who walks upon the wings of the the wind, and the printing press in the name of Him who is the source and front of all knowledge.

She has a special blessing for our daily bread which she would have us see as an image of the living bread that came down from heaven to give life to the world. Indeed, the work of preparing and serving food takes on deep sacredness when we understand that the family meal table is a type and symbol of the Eucharistic table of the Mass.

Workshops, factories, take on a full beauty and dignity when viewed in the light of the sacramentality of work. Whenever we put things in order we can think of God's creative power establishing the order of the universe. When we straighten out the cupboard, or clean the cellar, or lay the freshly washed

clothes in the drawer, we can think of God's wisdom "which reaches from end to end mightily and sweetly disposing all things". We can think also of Christ's redemptive power renewing and restoring the world. "Behold, I make all things new" is a text which can turn even house-cleaning into a meditation. Thus, at every turn of our daily work, we can contemplate an image of the invisible life of God in us, if only we learn how to read His sacramental writing in our lives.

Integral Christianity

A major part of our task as Christians today is to restore work to its full meaning and dignity. The Middle Ages gave us a tradition of creative human work for the service of man and the honor of God. Our time needs a fully developed theory of work to guide us to the right practice and to serve as a basis for a new pattern of integral Christian life.

A Christian philosophy of work is the first step toward the solution of the economic problems of our time. It is only in terms of a clear grasp of Christian principles that we can distinguish between human work and inhuman drud-

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"But Mother Cabrini, aren't you being a little naive-"

Work Is Love Made Visible . . .

The mother in her kitchen, preparing dinner for her family, understands that work is love made visible. The father busy in his shop or office to provide for wife and children knows the meaning of working with love.

“And what is it to work with love?”

It is to weave cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.

It is to build a house with affection even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.

It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.

It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit, and to know that all the blessed dead are standing about you and watching.

And if you cannot work with love, but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy.

For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds only half of man's hunger.

And if you grudge the crushing of the grapes, your grudge distills a poison in the wine.

And if you sing though as angels and love not the singing, you muffle man's ears to the voices of the day and the voices of the night.

—MORE ABOUT—

Integral Christianity

gery, can establish the primacy of work over money, and can restore the sense of personal vocation and dignity of the individual worker. It is only through the full Christian concept of work that we can build up an enduring spirit of unity among the workers. A philosophy of work is the beginning of a wholesome and creative use of leisure and the source from which an organic Christian culture can develop. A new attitude toward work is indispensable to the full development of the Christian person and the Christian family tradition.

Every morning when the Church sends her children forth to their daily tasks, she expresses the Christian attitude toward work in this prayer from the Office of Prime:

“Look down upon Thy servants, O Lord, and upon the works of Thy hands and direct their offspring. And let the glorious beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and direct Thou the work of our hands over us. Yea, the work of our hands do Thou direct.”



“But Joe, aren't you being a little naive?”

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